July 16, 1836

Our day began at 4:30 a.m. I woke up right where I fell asleep, fifty miles north east of Fort Dodge. The weather is hot and humid in the moths of July on the trail. Today we traveled about one hundred fifty to two hundred miles reaching the Cimarron Crossing where we will have to decide the path to take. The longer but less dangerous Mountain Branch, or the Cimarron Cutoff. When we arrived at Fort Mann, we traded with a couple of Indians, we gave them a bag of corn meal for three pillow. Hopefully tonight we will be able to sleep better. The trail was quite smooth today, except for the thirty mile stretch from The Caches to the Cimarron Crossing. On The Caches, we broke a wagon wheel which delayed us thirty-five minutes. During lunch, around 1:00 p.m., I realized that we were running dangerously low on food. I knew that there wouldn’t be much game from there on, so we stopped and I hunted. The first hour was slow hunting, but then it picked up when I finally spotted a group of seven buffalo. I shot and killed three of them before they could get away, and then got the meat that I needed. I guessed it was around three hundred pounds that I got only with two trips, give or take a few pounds. I returned home happy with my kill when I noticed that there was a hole in the water barrel. We had lost one quarter of the barrel and were left with only half. So now we have to survive off half a barrel of water. Luckily I patched it up quickly enough so that we didn’t lose any more. It’s going to be hard with five people in the family to get to a lake to refill. My wife and I have two sons, ages 11 and 13, and one daughter, age 12. Their names are Ada, Mark, and Kirk. We know that this trip must be hard on them, but they don’t complain much. They love to trade with the Indian children. They traded, I think, two things of jewelry for one doll and two knives. It’s about 8:00 as I write this, only about one hour thirty minutes since we stopped. I am starting to have a few regrets about coming on this trail. Now that I have time to think back I don’t know if it was the best choice. I just hope that this all works out in the favor of my whole family.

By James R.